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# Collaboration to Promote and Defend the Freedom to Read

**by Katie Anderson,  
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Public and school librarians share a belief that “free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America’s libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government” (Council of the ALA). In support of this fundamental democratic principle public and school libraries provide collections and services that offer a full range of choices to support the intellectual growth, personal development, individual interests and recreational needs of the individuals they serve. They seek to provide these resources and services in an “environment that promotes inquiry, creativity, self-direction, communication, and the ability to think critically and make reading choices” (OEMA). Collaboration between public and school libraries to promote and defend the freedom to read in the communities they jointly serve “contribute[s] to a future that values and protects freedom of speech in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free” (Council of the ALA).

“Celebrate the Freedom to Read in Oregon” is a collaborative project of the ACLU of Oregon, the Intellectual Freedom Committees of the Oregon Library Association, the Oregon Association of School Libraries, and the State Library to create statewide recognition of Banned Books Week (BBW) and encourage all types of libraries and bookstores to celebrate BBW. The project encourages participation by providing libraries and bookstores with a list of ideas for celebrating BBW, a list of library materials challenged in Oregon, and free “I Read Banned Book” buttons. To participate, Oregon schools, libraries, and bookstores need only to have a display, program or other activity to celebrate the freedom to read anytime during BBW or during the month of October.

The project began in 2006 as collaboration between the ACLU of Oregon and the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the Oregon Library Association as a statewide celebration of both the 50th anniversary of the ACLU of Oregon and 25th anniversary of Banned Books Week. In 2007, OASL was brought in to help encourage school libraries that had not done so before to participate in BBW, and to help develop ideas for displays, activities, and programs schools could use to make planning their BBW celebration easier. The State Library was also brought in that year to help expand the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse’s list of reported challenges to library materials to include challenges to library materials that have gone unreported.

In 2008, 241 libraries and bookstores in 31 of 36 Oregon counties participated in BBW. Libraries and bookstores that wish to participate in 2010 should contact Candace Morgan at [cd\\_df\\_morgan@msn.com](mailto:cd_df_morgan@msn.com). Include the name and address of the library, number of branches or locations that will be participating and the name, phone number and e-mail of the contact person. Please include “Banned Books Week” in the subject line.

Below are some of the ways participating school and public libraries have collaborated to celebrate BBW.

- High School students interviewed Public Library staff for their school’s electronic message board.  
*Hillsboro Public Library*
- During an event community members read aloud an excerpt from their favorite banned book. A local high school English teacher read from and discussed his experiences teaching a frequently challenged book.  
*Lake Oswego Public Library*



- At a middle school literacy night, small yellow “I Read Banned Book” buttons were given away to parents, teachers and students after they had completed a short form about a banned book they had read and whether or not they recommended it.

*Springfield Public Library*

- Suggestions from Multnomah Co. Library included: sponsoring an Open House at the library for school media specialists in the service area for the library; putting up posters; handing out bookmarks; displaying challenged and banned books; giving a Banned Books T-shirt to those who answer a BBW Quiz; and encouraging media specialists to use the BBW Quiz in their school libraries.

*Multnomah County Library,  
Capitol Hill Branch*

- Multnomah County Library School Corps presented “Feasting on Forbidden Fruit” (How censorship affects children and teens, including an overview of censorship issues in the U.S., a PowerPoint presentation on challenged books, and a chance for students to review banned and challenged picture book.)

*Madison High School,  
Portland Public Schools*

- School and public librarians could collaborate to implement a banned/challenged book club for students.

- Invite a public librarian to come book talk challenged books to your students.

- Have a contest where students design bookmarks for challenged books in Oregon, bookmarks are voted on at the school and public library. The winners are made into bookmarks and distributed at the school and library.

- School and public librarians could collaborate to have students write reviews of challenged/banned. Public librarian then posts the reviews on the library’s blog or youth services Web page.

Banned Book Week is a successful promotion of the Freedom to Read and we encourage all libraries to participate. Whether you are in a school or public library you can find more ideas for celebrating BBW by visiting the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse at <http://oregon.gov/OSL/LD/intellectual.shtml> and then contact your public or school librarian to collaborate in this effort and reinforce the important message of Banned Book Week within your community. 🌿

Here are other ideas to consider:

- Have the school or community newspaper or local radio or television station interview library staff from both the school and public library about BBW, the freedom to read, or censorship.
- Have students create poems, posters, or other works of art expressing what the freedom to read means to them and display their art in the local public library during BBW.

## References

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